

Mount St Joseph: Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105263
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308813
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	909
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Palframan
Headteacher	Miss Penelope Walker
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2004
School address	Greenland Road Farnworth Bolton Lancashire BL4 0HU
Telephone number	01204 391800
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mount St Joseph Business and Enterprise College is an 11 to 16 Roman Catholic mixed comprehensive. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with statements of special educational need are well above the national average. The proportion of those eligible for free school meals is above national average. The school serves several areas of significant socio-economic deprivation. About 14% of the school's students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2003 the school achieved specialist status as a Business and Enterprise College.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is now a satisfactory and improving school. Between 2005/06, the school entered a period which was to be characterised by low examination pass rates and the less effective application of quality assurance. Effective leadership is now being provided by the headteacher and senior managers in tackling the school's recent pattern of underachievement. There is sound evidence to demonstrate that improvement strategies are having an impact on achievement and standards, which are now satisfactory. An upward improvement trend in pass rates has been sustained in 2006/07. The standards of student work examined by inspectors were at least satisfactory. The school recognises that further improvement is required at both Key Stage 3 and 4 and particularly in science.

Students make good progress in their personal development. Students enjoy their lessons and there is generally good behaviour. The school actively promotes healthy lifestyles and the need for regular exercise. Students and parents say that there are few instances of bullying and that, where they do arise, they are dealt with appropriately. Students learn much about their own cultural heritage but opportunities are missed to interact with the rich cultural diversity around them.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. While a number of departments have made significant strides in teaching and learning, improvement has not been consistent across the curriculum. For example, there remain inconsistencies in the quality of written and verbal feedback to students, and more able students are not always adequately challenged. The curriculum is good. The school is actively tackling students' low literacy rates on entry. A wide range of external partnerships and community links enhances a broad and rich curriculum in Year 10 and 11. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good aspects. The pastoral care provided by staff is strong. Academic guidance is less well developed and less consistently applied across the curriculum.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The school has dealt effectively with a number of issues raised at the last inspection and the underachievement in results that occurred in 2005/06. Quality assurance systems and the use of data have been improved. Self-evaluation at the whole school level is accurate. There remain some inconsistencies in self-evaluation and development planning at middle management level. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards at Key Stage 3 and 4 and particularly in science.
- Embed the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- Extend the learning and progress of students who are more able.
- Improve the quality of written and verbal feedback to students.
- Improve self-evaluation and development planning at middle management level.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the school with standards that are broadly in line with the national average. However, this headline statistic masks the low literacy levels of many students. Standards reached by students aged 14 improved between 2004 and 2006 but were still below the national average. The provisional results for 2007 continue the upward trend in the pass rates reached, and the progress made, by students in English and mathematics. In science, standards did not improve and all groups of students made significantly less progress than they should. However, in the science lessons observed and the work scrutinised during the inspection standards were at least satisfactory.

There is an improving trend in students' standards and progress at GCSE level. The provisional results for 2007 show that 19% more students achieved five A* to C grades. The percentage of students who achieved five A* to C grades including mathematics and English also increased significantly. This is an improvement compared to pass rates and progress in 2005 and 2006, although standards still remain just below the national average. Students with English as an additional language achieved higher standards than other students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Nevertheless, students without additional targeted support significantly underachieved in terms of five good passes at GCSE. The school's tracking of students' progress indicates it is on course to meet the targets it has set for 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. Students mature into well rounded and thoughtful young people as a result of strong personal, social, health and citizenship education. Spiritual, moral and social development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory. Although students learn much about their own cultural heritage, there are not enough opportunities for them to interact with the rich cultural diversity around them. Attitudes to learning are good. Students enjoy the full breadth of the curriculum and activities on offer. The school has initiated improvements to promote positive attitudes towards healthy living, the need for regular exercise and the need to adopt safe practices. Students spoken with said that bullying is not a significant issue and challenging behaviour is well managed. Students make a strong contribution to the community. Opportunities to develop teamwork skills and to take on responsibilities, through the school council and prefect system, make a good contribution to students' social development and self-confidence. Students are well prepared for the future. For instance, initiatives such as the Year 9 'face to face with finance', in partnership with several businesses, has led to well embedded enterprise skills. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with several good features. Well focused staff development, close work with the local authority and the use of external consultants are developing new approaches to learning. Many teachers have embraced new ideas with enthusiasm and, consequently, teaching is improving. Students enjoy and make the greatest

progress in lessons where they are engaged by a range of teaching and learning activities. These lessons are well prepared with clear objectives set and explained. High quality resources combined with a brisk pace and good planning of group work activities enhance the students' enjoyment, involvement and progress. An increasing number of departments are developing the use of the impressive facilities of the Bolton Technology Innovation Centre to extend and challenge student learning through information and communication technology. Good practice was observed in English, catering, textiles, performing arts and history.

In the weaker lessons, the pace is slower and questioning is not extensive enough to involve students. These lessons were too teacher-centred and students were not pushed to achieve the standards of which they are capable. Resources to enhance learning are less well developed. Activities are not always provided to challenge and extend the learning of the more able students. The school's use of assessment information to set targets and monitor student progress has improved and now allows for greater intervention to help those students who are underachieving. However, good practice is not embedded across the curriculum. Teachers sometimes miss the opportunity to re-enforce learning through homework.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and responsive to student needs. The school is proactive in its approach to managing students' low literacy levels in Year 7 with the provision of an integrated curriculum. This has improved stability for students and allows them to use the literacy skills taught in English across other subjects and in a challenging and supportive environment.

In Years 10 and 11 four pathways are offered. Students are guided in their choice of pathway so that their economic well-being and enjoyment of school is enhanced. Good links have been established with a wide range of external providers to promote opportunities in young apprenticeship schemes and vocational qualifications. Students who are at risk of not continuing with education, employment or training are supported through 'Aim Higher', residentials and follow up interviews in school. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities which are appreciated by the students. Trips, visits, retreats and other enrichment opportunities make a good contribution to students' enjoyment and enhance positive relationships. The Business and Enterprise Specialist status is embedded throughout the school and promotes the development of self-confidence and enterprise skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Arrangements to ensure child protection, health and safety are in place and regularly reviewed. The pastoral support and guidance is effective. There is positive support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, vulnerable students and those displaying challenging behaviour. Strong links with outside agencies ensure that all students, including those most at risk, are well supported. The school has worked hard to manage student behaviour, which is good. Students are well motivated by a system of rewards which recognise good personal development and effort in learning. However, academic guidance is less well developed. The tracking and monitoring of students' progress has improved but is not consistently applied across all areas of the school. Opportunities to identify improvement strategies in lessons and through the marking of work are sometimes lost.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's professional dedication and firm leadership reflect her clear vision for continuing development and improvement. She and her senior colleagues have led a recovery of standards and achievement since 2006. The more effective monitoring of departments and evaluation of teaching and learning have contributed much to the recent improvements seen in many subject areas. The school recognises, however, that a minority of departments still have some way to go particularly in improving the quality of self-evaluation and development plans. A strong sense of common purpose is evident, although quality assurance processes are not consistently applied across the curriculum. Self-evaluation helps teachers at all levels to identify where priorities and opportunities need to be planned. Judgements are often accurate, but occasionally too generous. Effective monitoring and professional development are correcting some shortfalls in standards and increasingly yielding the required outcomes, so the school clearly demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

The headteacher, governors and school managers have worked hard to adapt and innovate. Equality of opportunity has high priority, but a need persists to stretch the most able, whilst ensuring that all youngsters with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve to the best of their ability. The school makes productive use of its staff specialisms, its technology suites and the enhanced facilities brought by external contacts. Teachers have established strong links with local agencies, schools and employers, which add to the variety of courses available.

The school enjoys the confidence of its students, parents and governors. Students are frequently consulted about developments in the school. The governing body is dynamic and supportive, offering challenge while working in productive harmony with the school managers. In view of its inclusive ethos, the variety of its curriculum and students' satisfactory levels of achievement, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Mount St Joseph Business and Enterprise College, Lancashire,
BL4 0HU

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our two days at your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to so many of you about your work, interests and how much you enjoy and give to the school.

Your school is now making satisfactory progress and is an improving school. The school is well led. The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard because they want you to do the very best you can.

Most importantly your achievement and examination results are beginning to improve after a year where they had been poor. You enjoy many of your lessons, particularly when you know that you are improving and learning. However, some of you are not reaching the standards that you are capable of. You can play an important part in this by working with your teachers and helping them to improve your work.

There is some good teaching in the school and in these lessons you respond well to the teachers' high expectations and you make good progress. However, this is not the case across all of the school. In some lessons you are not being given work which really stretches you or encourages you to enjoy learning, achieve well and progress.

Your curriculum options are good and serve your abilities and offer you a wider range of opportunities for the future. You enjoy a wide range of extra activities. The teachers and support staff care for you and give you satisfactory guidance.

Your school needs to:

- improve pass rates and your progress at Key Stage 3 and 4 and particularly in science
- improve written and verbal feedback to you so that you know how to improve further
- share the best practice in teaching across all subjects
- give you more work that really stretches you so that you achieve well and progress
- improve the consistency of planning in some departments.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you well for your future education.